

Tajuk : Top guns in the fray

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KUCHING: Despite being a Badminton World Federation (BWF) Level Four tournament, the Maybank Malaysia International Challenge has been able to attract the participation of the world's top 100 ranked players.

As at the closing date on Oct 25, the organiser Badminton Association of Malaysia received entries from more than 200 players from 15 countries including host Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Russia, Taiwan and Kazakhstan.

Leading the Malaysian charge in the men's singles contest is Muhammad Hafiz Hashim who is world number 40 while his compatriots include Mohamad Arif Abdul Latif (No. 46), world junior singles champion in 2011 Zulfadli Zulkifi (68), Pahang Open champion Misbun Ramdan Mohmed Misbun (75) and veteran campaigners Kuan Beng Hong (176) and Wong Choon Hann (219).

Indonesia are also putting up a strong challenge in this category, with Wisnu Yuli Prasetyo (105) spearheading the challenge with other contenders Dharma Alrie

Gune (130), Riyanto Subagia (144), Sukamata Evet (164) and Adi Pratama (226).

Singapore's Ashtor Chen Yong Zhao is the third highest ranked player in the men's singles contest at 54.

In the women's singles, Malaysia occupy the top three ranked players with Sannatasah Saniru (66), sisters Lydia Cheah Li Ya (67) and Sonia Cheah Su Ya (82).

The fourth highest ranked player is Singapore's Chen Jiayuan (95) while the Indonesian top guns are Yeni Asmarani (134) and Maziyyah Nadhir (136).

In the men's doubles, Indonesia's Ronald Alexander and Selvanus Geh are the top pair, ranked No. 86, followed by the pair from Brunei Heri Setiawan and Al-Sayed Jafar Ebrahim Jafar (105) and Indonesia's Ase Yusuf and Wahyu Nayaka Arya Pankaryanira (106).

Heading the contention in the women's doubles are Malaysian pairs of Lee Meng Yean-Chow Mei Kuan (59) and Soong Fie Cho-Amelia Alicia Anscelly (70) while Indonesian pair of Shella Devi Aulia-Anggia Shitta Awada (76)

are third highest ranked pair.

Meanwhile, Lai Pei Jing and Tan Aik Guan (37) will return to defend their mixed doubles crown and they will face the challenge of the pair from Singapore Thng Ting Ting-Liu Yi (61) and Annisa Saufika-Lukhi Apri Nugroho (97) from Indonesia.

Co-hosted by the Sarawak Badminton Association and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), the competition that offers a total prize-money of US\$15,000 (about RM46,500) will be held at Unimas Indoor Stadium from Nov 13-18.

Event sponsors are Maybank, Proton, 100Plus, Yonex, Maxis, Jati and Phiten.

Tickets are available from yesterday at RM10 per ticket for qualifying and preliminary matches on Nov 13-15, RM20 for quarterfinals on Nov 16, RM30 for semi-finals on Nov 17 and RM40 for finals on Nov 18.

For tickets and enquiries, call SBA at 082-579598 or SBA secretary Abd Hadi Abd Kadir at 016-8644101, treasurer Soh Theng Chai (019-8166268) or executive secretary Bong Nyat Nee (016-8938962).